



General Questions

How will projects be evaluated? How will winning projects be determined?

More than 1,000 projects were submitted to the AEIF competition in 2017. The State Department's regional experts and the Office of Alumni Affairs, in consultation with your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate, will evaluate project proposals, budgets, and budget justifications. Projects will be selected for funding based on how well they fulfill the criteria below:

- Relevance of the project to the selected theme
- Innovation
- Feasibility of implementation
- Degree of alumni involvement
- Timeliness/relevance of activities
- Impact of the project on the defined project beneficiaries
- Reasonable budget request and budget justification

When is 14:00 Eastern U.S. (i.e. New York) on March 29, 2018 in my country?

Please use a time zone converter to find out what time the deadline for submission is in your country. In mid-March, many parts of the United States changed to daylight savings time which may alter the time difference in relation to your country. When converting time, please enter the date of March 29 and New York as the location to ensure you receive accurate results. There are many time zone converters available online but you may consider using <http://www.thetimezoneconverter.com/>.

Do all members of the alumni team need to be from the same country or same exchange program?

Your alumni team can be comprised of alumni from different countries and other exchange programs than your own.

Can I submit more than one project?

You are allowed to submit more than one project as long as it is different and supports a different theme than your original project.

Can I be a member of more than one project?

Yes, you can be a member of more than one project. You can be a part of multiple teams. Please take into consideration the time and resources you have available to support more than one project in the event that more than one project you are involved with is funded.

Can non-alumni be part of my team?

Yes, you can have non-alumni help with your project. Please include them and describe how they will be involved in your project in the “Partners” section of the application form.

If my project wins, how will the funds be distributed and disbursed?

Winning projects will be funded through a grant from the U.S. Embassy in your country. Generally, the grant is disbursed in installments. Each U.S. Embassy handles the disbursement of funds differently. In some countries, a non-governmental organization (NGO), a private business, an alumni association, or an academic institution must receive the grant. In other places, the team can receive a grant. Contact the Alumni Coordinator in your country to learn more about this process.

What is a community or public service project?

Community or public service is work done by a person or group of people to benefit other people in your community. For these types of projects, implementers volunteer their time and do not receive a salary. This is why AEIF requires you to have a minimum of three alumni on your team and encourages you to work with other partners to help distribute the workload of the project. Team members and partners can contribute different skills and resources to the project.

Can I charge a fee for people to participate in my project?

No, you should not charge a fee to the beneficiaries of your AEIF project.

Can I submit a proposal for an existing project that is already being implemented?

You may submit a proposal for a project if you will expand on the original scope of that project and make adjustments based on lessons learned and results from the original project. For example, if you intend to work with new groups of people in a different city or town, or if you plan to use a different communication method, etc., those would be considered new innovations to your project

If I have previously won an AEIF grant, am I eligible to apply for this year's competition?

Yes, you may participate in the AEIF competition this year as a team member or team leader. Your project should be different than your winning project. Please consider the time and resources you have available to support more than one project in the event that more than one project you are involved with this year is funded.

Will having more alumni on my team make my project more competitive?

Not necessarily. In order for your project to be considered for the competition, you must have a minimum of three alumni on your team (this number includes the team leader). Your project will be evaluated based on merit and how well it addresses the challenge or need you have identified.

Be realistic with the number of people you add to your team. Ask yourself: What will their roles be in implementing the project? Do team members have the time and resources to dedicate to the project?

How can I find other alumni to join my team?

For your project to be eligible for consideration, each team must include a minimum of three alumni (this number includes the team leader) who are registered on the International Exchange Alumni website.

Looking for new team members? Search the [Alumni Directory](#) on the International Exchange Alumni website or contact the Public Affairs Section at your local [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#).

If you or a team member do not have an account on the IEA website, please visit the [Registration Information Page](#).

Can the AEIF team give me feedback on my project before the deadline or after the deadline if my project is not selected for funding?

Unfortunately, due to the high number of proposals received (more than 1,000 in 2017!), the AEIF team cannot give feedback to individual proposals at any time during or after the competition. You may wish to reach out to your alumni coordinator or your fellow alumni (particularly previous AEIF winners) for feedback about how to strengthen your proposal if you wish to apply again in the future.

Questions about the AEIF proposal form

What should I include in my project title?

Create a short, creative title that clearly describes your project. If your project is selected as a winner, a descriptive title will also help you promote your project. Try to avoid using acronyms that are not widely known or translatable into your local language.

My project addresses more than one theme; which should I choose?

You can only select one project theme. Choose the theme that best describes the primary intent of your project. For definitions of the themes, visit the Definition of Themes section of the [AEIF Help Desk](#).

Can my project be implemented in multiple countries?

Yes. When filling out the proposal form, you will be prompted to select the primary location where your project will take place. You may add up to five additional countries by selecting Yes to the question on the proposal form “Are there additional locations where your project will take place?”

You are required to identify the city/town and the province/state for each country. This will help the reviewers better understand the communities in which you plan to implement your activities.

Note: Projects cannot be implemented in the United States or its territories. However, alumni from the United States may participate as team members on projects taking place in other countries. Alumni from the United States cannot be team leaders.

What challenge or need should our project address?

You should briefly explain the context of the challenge, the problem, or the need that your team will try to address. What is the issue, where is it happening, who is affected by it, and how are they affected? This information helps someone unfamiliar with the problem to better understand it. Once you clearly articulate the challenge, the problem, or the need, you must also provide an overview of how the activities of your project will help to overcome or solve the problem or challenge (use the who, what, where, when, and why model—don't forget to articulate why you're doing what you propose to do). Possible ways to address these challenges can be awareness campaigns, skills trainings, advocacy for certain issues, etc. Be sure to give enough context so someone who doesn't know your country well will be able to understand the challenge and why your project will help.

What is an innovative project?

Tell us your approach or solution to the challenge, problem, or need. The approach or solution should be original for your community or local context. Ask yourself, “Has this type of project been previously implemented in this location or with the same beneficiaries and/or partners?” You should consider how the project is different from what others have done. Are the approaches creative or distinctive for your subject matter? The State Department considers any project with uncommon methodology and practices, subject matter, location, audience, and/or results to be innovative.

How do we describe our project's potential impact?

Now that you know how you plan to go about implementing your project, tell us what you hope to achieve. What kinds of changes would you like to see as a result of your project's activities? What measurable results do you anticipate after completion of this project?

Can you tell us more about the alumni project team leader and members?

The alumni team consists of all alumni members who will support the project.

Team Leader: The team leader is the alumna/us who submits the project. All others on a project are called team members. Once a team leader has created a project, he/she must add team member information in the “Add Alumni Team Information” section of the online proposal.

Alumni team: By the submission deadline of March 29, 2018 at 14:00 EDT (U.S. Eastern Daylight Time i.e. New York), each team must have a minimum of three members (including

the team leader) who are current or former participants of a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program and who are registered on the International Exchange Alumni website. Projects that do not meet this requirement will not be considered.

- The team leader must be a non-U.S. citizen. U.S. citizens can be team members but they cannot serve as a “team leader” or submit a project.
- The implementation of project activities must be performed outside the United States.
- Multi-country alumni cooperation is encouraged where it serves the needs of a project, but is not required.
- Teams may have non-alumni members (such as local partners, friends, colleagues, volunteers, etc), but these team members will not be included in team’s total members for the purpose of this competition.

What are the roles and expectations of the alumni team?

Your alumni team must play an integral role in organizing and implementing the project. Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) or other partner organizations may also play a role; however, projects which are entirely implemented by other organizations will not be considered for this competition.

In addition to providing the name, exchange program, and email address of each team member, the Team Leader must indicate the role each member will play in the project, and describe which activities they will be involved in, etc.

Below are **possible** roles team members can play. You do not have to use these but you must explain how each person will contribute towards the implementation of the project.

- *Project Implementation*: Responsible for implementing a range of project activities, in coordination with other team members.
- *Administrative Coordination*: Responsible for providing administrative support for the project.
- *Finance/Accounting*: Responsible for financial management, accounting, and bookkeeping, including fulfilling any financial reporting requirements associated with U.S. Government grant funding regulations.
- *Media Outreach and Promotion*: Responsible for a range of promotional activities and communication about the project, including social media promotion and liaising with the media.
- *Technical Support*: Responsible for various technical aspects of the project (for example, providing audio/visual support or technical expertise).
- *Advisor*: Responsible for advising the team leader and team members on various aspects of the project development and/or implementation.

Who are beneficiaries?

Beneficiaries are the primary audience or target group for your project. People or institutions that directly benefit from or are impacted by your project are beneficiaries. You may have primary, secondary, and tertiary beneficiaries.

Who are local partners?

While not required, you are encouraged to work with partner organizations, including public and private organizations, academia, non-governmental organizations, etc., when it supports your project goals. Partners could contribute to cost-sharing (funds, donation of venue, or other resources), provide expertise, assist with promotion of your project, etc. Partners may also include non-alumni individuals (colleagues, friends, family, volunteers, etc).

What is an implementation plan and timeline?

The implementation plan and timeline should answer the questions “what, when, why, where, and how?” Your implementation plan should include a timeline for each major step or phase that articulates what project team members will do and what activities will be performed. The implementation plan and timeline must also provide quantitative information about participants and events. Depending on the duration of the project, the timeframe for each step or phase might be week to week, month to month, etc., and should include steps or phases beginning with project preparation and ending with a project impact/outcome evaluation. Please be specific in this section and provide concrete information about the different steps in your project implementation.

What is a communications plan?

The communications plan should explain how your team will promote your project to the public and beneficiaries. The communications plan should include information about how you will use social media, traditional media, or other forms of communication to share information about your project.

What are project evaluation methods?

Please explain how your team will know if the project was successful, what impact it had, and what outcome was achieved. Draft an evaluation plan that explains what you plan to measure and what tools or methods you might utilize to measure results. Common evaluation tools include surveys, focus groups, in-depth interviews, meetings, social media analytics, and metrics. Briefly explain how these results might be shared and with whom.

How will the impact of your project continue after implementation?

AEIF projects must be completed within one year from the date that a winning team obtains funds. If implementation is successful, how will the project be sustained? In other words, explain how your team plans to continue the impact of this project beyond this initial funding year.

How do I access the AEIF proposal form?

Note: You can only access the online proposal form beginning on March 1, 2018 starting at 14:00 EST (U.S. Eastern Standard Time i.e. New York).

After the competition begins, visit the [main AEIF page](#) and click on the “Apply to AEIF” button at the bottom of the page to access the online form, which will be on the FluidReview platform.

Once you’re on the landing page, click on the button “Sign in or Register” and you will be prompted to get started and create a new application.

Remember, it’s a good idea to have your proposal drafted on a separate text document so you can easily copy/paste into the online form. You can download the proposal questions from the [AEIF Help Desk](#). Note: The FluidReview platform *does not support Rich Text formats*, so bullet points, underline, italics and bold will not be saved.

Can I skip sections in the proposal form if I am not ready?

Yes, if you’re not ready to complete a section, you can navigate to different sections of the form by clicking on the blue links at the top of the page (i.e. “Project Implementation” or “Funding and Budget”)

Note: If you have some fields filled out on a page, remember to save your work using the “Save and Continue” button to ensure your work is saved. All fields must be completed

before submitting your proposal. You will receive an error message if you are missing required fields.

Can I return to my proposal later if I am not ready to submit?

Yes, you can begin a proposal and return to it later. To do this you can log back into the International Exchange Alumni site and click the button “Apply to AEIF.” You will be redirected to the FluidReview site. There you can click on the application and resume your work.

Remember, you must submit your completed application before the deadline of March 29, 2018 at 14:00 EDT (U.S. Eastern Daylight Time i.e. New York).

What should I do before I submit my AEIF proposal and budget?

Proofread your proposal to make sure there are no incomplete sentences or missing details. Give your proposal to someone who is unfamiliar with the challenge you are addressing to read it to see if they are able to understand your project. Please review the budget form to ensure that your costs are correctly calculated and the total amounts for AEIF funds requested and cost share is accurate.

What can I expect once I submit my proposal?

Once you submit a proposal you will receive an email confirmation to the email address associated with your International Exchange Alumni account. You can download a copy of your submitted project by clicking on the link to your project and selecting “Download Application.”

Once the competition ends on March 29, all eligible proposals will be reviewed. Finalists will be contacted in June. Those not recommended for funding will also be notified.

Remember, once you submit your application, you can no longer make any changes. If you need to make changes to a proposal that you have submitted, you may “Withdraw” that proposal and create a new one and submit it by the deadline.

Having trouble with the application form?

If you experience technical issues with the application form, for example, the page won't load, please contact the Fluid Review support support@fluidreview.com.

If you have questions about the competition for which you have not found an answer on the CAQs (Commonly Asked Questions) or the AEIF Help Desk, you may email AEIF@state.gov. We will also host live Q&A sessions in English on Zoom on March 7, 2018 at 07:00 EST and March 21, 2018 at 21:00 EDT. More information will be provided in the International Exchange Alumni newsletter, the International Exchange Alumni

Questions about the AEIF budget

How much funding can I request?

Alumni can request between \$5,000 and \$25,000 in support of their project. All items must be in US dollars. Budgets of winning projects are subject to approval. (The amount awarded to the team may be different from the amount requested).

What costs are allowed in the budget? What costs are not allowed?

AEIF funds can be used to pay for:

- Intra-regional or in-country transportation
- Trainer or speaker expenses
- Reasonable equipment and materials
- Meals or refreshments that are integral to the overall project goals (i.e. working lunch during a meeting)
- Communications and publicity materials such as manuals or project advertisements

AEIF funds cannot be used to pay for: (This list is not exhaustive.)

- Airfare to or from the United States
- Sustained staff salaries, office space, and overhead/operational expenses
- Large items of durable equipment
- Alcohol, excessive meals, refreshments, or entertainment
- Academic research
- Provision of direct social services to a population (e.g. Funding cannot be used to buy books or medicine to give to a community. However, funding can be used to purchase books that will be used in a training or awareness campaign.)
- Support or opposition of partisan political activity

Do I need to include a budget?

Yes. You must submit a budget by the deadline of March 29, 2018 at 14:00 pm EDT (Eastern U.S. Time Zone, i.e. New York) in order for your project to be eligible for consideration. Budget forms must be in English and use US dollars as the currency. You may download the budget template and use the example budget as a guide. Please use only the budget template provided. Once you have completed your budget form, you must upload the file to your proposal form on the FluidReview application platform.

Remember, you must click the “Submit Your AEIF Application” button by the March 29, 2018 at 14:00 EDT in order for your project to be considered.

Note: Items of related costs should not be lumped together. For example, travel, accommodations, and per diem for a speaker should be three separate line items.

How do I develop a budget justification?

In addition to submitting a complete budget, teams must submit a budget justification. This is a new requirement in 2018. The budget justification tells how you calculated the costs in your budget and explains why those costs are necessary for your project. It demonstrates your research into the costs of your projects and tells the project review team exactly how you will spend the AEIF award funds.

For more information and to view a sample of a budget justification, please refer to the “Guide to the AEIF Budget Form” in the AEIF Help Desk.

How do I add more line items?

To add additional rows to your budget form, make sure you have entered items into the available rows in either the AEIF Funds or Cost Share sections. Then, right click on the “subtotal” line and click on “Insert”. A new row should be inserted where you can add your additional item and cost. The subtotal should automatically adjust to the new amount.